



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

nals of the colonial assemblies, and the original statutes in detail. From some experience in this inquiry, we are well aware of the difficulty of procuring this description of documents with any degree of completeness. In all the colonies there was great negligence in preserving them, and it is very rare to find a complete copy either of the journals, or of the laws as originally passed, in any of the old states. In most cases they were printed, and in others not; but even the printed copies have been lost, or so much scattered, as to render it almost impossible to procure an entire set. Hening's *Collection of the Laws of Virginia*, in thirteen volumes, is an honorable exception, honorable to the state at whose charge it was published, and to the editor as a testimony of his learning, research, and industry. It is beyond all comparison the most complete and valuable collection of materials for history, which has been published in any of the states; and if the other states would follow this noble example of Virginia, nothing more could be desired in this department.

After having derived much satisfaction ourselves from Dr Holmes's work, we recommend it with confidence to such persons as take an interest in the topics on which it treats. It would be a valuable acquisition to every library, public or private, in the country. It is the best repository of historical, chronological, and biographical knowledge respecting America, that can be found embodied in one work.

ART. VIII.—*The Works of Antonio Canova in Sculpture and Modelling, engraved in Outline by Henry Moses, with Descriptions from the Italian of the Countess Albrizzi, and a Biographical Memoir by Count Cicognara.* 2 vols. folio. London. 1824.

IN a preceding number of this journal,* we gave some account of the principal events in the life of Canova, and of the most remarkable among the multiplied productions of his chisel. Not long after the article containing it appeared, the grave closed over this celebrated artist, who died at Venice on the thirteenth

* North American Review, Vol. x. p. 372.

of October, 1822, in the sixty-fifth year of his age, universally lamented throughout the civilized world, as one of those rare individuals whose extraordinary and unrivalled genius throws a lustre on the period in which they live, and whose loss is, in the nature of things, altogether irreparable. The biographical memoirs and collections of engravings of his works, which have appeared since his death, supply materials for a somewhat ampler notice than we were then able to furnish; and we avail ourselves with pleasure of the opportunity for rendering complete justice to the memory of this great artist, who has particularly recommended himself to the attention of Americans, by consecrating one of his works to the honor of our political savior and father. A tribute of this kind is the more necessary in this country, because the British journalists, with their characteristic jealousy of all foreign excellence, have studiously underrated the merit of Canova, even since his death, in the vain attempt to give their own countryman, Chantrey, a preëminence over him, which that justly distinguished and amiable sculptor would himself as little dream of claiming, as any competent judge of assigning it to him. One of the publications, from which we drew the materials for our former article on this subject, was the series of descriptions of the works of Canova by the Countess Albrizzi of Venice; and we mentioned, in the course of our remarks, that that lady had announced the intention of publishing a collection of engravings of them, with a biography by herself of her illustrious countryman and friend. The work now before us, although no satisfactory account is given of its origin by the British editors, appears to be a reprint, in an English dress, of the one which Mad. Albrizzi has probably published in pursuance of this intention, but which has not yet reached us. It contains a complete collection of engravings in outline of all the productions of Canova, accompanied by the commentaries of this lady, and by a biography, which is, however, not from her pen, but that of Count Cicognara, a Venetian nobleman, well known to the world by his literary talent and taste in the fine arts. The descriptions of Mad. Albrizzi are of a poetical rather than critical character, and probably appear to more advantage in their original shape, than in the present translation, which, however, is not a bad one. The biography is a judicious and unpretending narrative of the leading incidents in a life of exclusive and untiring devotion to art, and of which the best and only faithful

record is to be found in the charming productions of the artist. We propose, in the present article, to lay before our readers a concise sketch of these events, with such observations on the works of Canova as may be suggested by the descriptions and engravings here given of them, or by the personal survey which we have had opportunity to take of some of the most remarkable among the number.

Canova was a native of Possagno, a village situated near the city of Asolo at the foot of the Venetian Alps. The talent for sculpture was hereditary in his family, having been exercised by his father and grandfather with a good degree of success in the construction of monuments, altars, and other works, mostly for the interior decoration of the churches in their neighborhood. His father died while Canova was yet an infant, and it was from his grandfather, who still continued at a very advanced age the practice of the art, that he received his first instruction in the mechanical part of it. The peculiar aptitude which he exhibited under these circumstances, attracted the attention of several noblemen of taste, in the immediate vicinity of his native village, who supplied the young sculptor with the means of removing to Venice and studying under the first artists of that city, which he accordingly did, at about fourteen years of age. He began very early to exhibit, both in the choice of his subjects and in his mode of treating them, the lofty spirit and correct taste which afterwards raised him to the head of his art. His *Orpheus* and *Eurydice*, which were executed in his sixteenth and seventeenth years, though inferior to his later productions, excited in a singular degree the admiration of his countrymen, and announced the dawn of a genius of the highest promise. They are still preserved in the palace of his earliest patron, the Patrician Giovanni Falieri, at Asolo. The success of these and several other groups and statues, which he executed not long after, encouraged his friends to afford him the opportunity of studying at Rome,—the central point and, as it were, metropolis of the fine arts. He was accordingly placed there at the close of the year 1780, under the protection of the Venetian ambassador, the Chevalier Girolamo Zulian. As a provision for the expenses of his residence at Rome, the government of his native republic voted him an annual pension of three hundred ducats for three years.

Such were the circumstances under which Canova entered on his brilliant career. From this time forward he passed his

life, with the exception of occasional short excursions for recreation or business, in his workshop at Rome, where he continued his labors with uninterrupted assiduity through the whole series of political revolutions which shook the world around him, and swept into their vortex almost every other individual of any note or talent in Italy. No clearer proof could be given of the absorbing and unconquerable passion for his art with which he was possessed, and which alone could have raised him to the distinction he attained. He was aware, before he left Venice, of the great inferiority of the modern style of sculpture, and had already fixed his eyes on the pure and perfect models of antiquity. In this correct taste he was confirmed and encouraged, upon his arrival at Rome, as well by his own observations upon the works of art, which he there saw, as by the advice and opinion of the best judges from all parts of Europe, whom he met with in that city. After allowing him a sufficient time to prepare himself, by a proper course of study, for new efforts, the Venetian ambassador placed at his disposal a fine block of marble, and invited him to execute, upon a subject of his own choice, a work which should furnish a specimen of the improvement that he had derived from his residence at Rome. Canova, laboring in the palace and under the eye of the ambassador, who has thus associated his name with the glory of his *protégé*, converted this block of marble into the group of Theseus and the Minotaur,—the first of his works in which he exhibited the maturity of his talent. This production realized the highest expectations entertained by the patrons of the young artist; and the execution of it may be said to form an epoch in the history of modern sculpture. The circumstances attending this interesting moment in the life of Canova, are related by his biographer in the following terms;

‘ On his arrival at Rome, Canova had experienced the kindest reception from the Venetian ambassador, and had free access to his splendid mansion. This enlightened and accomplished nobleman, soon becoming impressed with a high sense of the merit and powers of the young sculptor, procured from Venice a cast in plaster of the group of Dædalus and Icarus, which he had executed in that city, for the purpose of exhibiting it to the artists and connoisseurs at Rome. The house of the ambassador was, indeed, a kind of athenæum, and frequented by all the persons most distinguished by talents and genius in that city. On the occasion of the first production of this group, he was surrounded

by Cades, Volpato, Battoni, Gavin Hamilton, Puccini, and many other distinguished artists and critics, who contemplated the work with silent astonishment, not daring to censure what, although at variance with the style then followed, commanded their admiration, and revealed the brightest prospects. The embarrassment of the youth at this juncture was extreme, and he frequently spoke of it afterwards as one of the most anxious moments of his life. From this state he was, however, soon relieved by the friendly and paternal address of Gavin Hamilton, exciting him to unite with so exact and beautiful an imitation of nature the fine taste and *beau idéal* of the ancients, of which Rome contained so many models; predicting, at the same time, that by such a course he would greatly pass the limits which had been reached by the moderns. But the censure which he overheard from one who stood behind him, was more agreeable to the young artist than any direct eulogium. This Aristarchus observed, that, from the effect produced on the observer by the naked forms so carefully finished in this group, they must have been moulded upon a living subject, when in reality they were wholly the result of his severe study of the human form, entirely unassisted by mechanical means. This greatly encouraged the young artist, and convinced him that he had already raised himself above the mediocrity of his contemporaries.

‘From the moment of his arrival at Rome, he had commenced a severe and profound study of the great models of ancient art, without, however, neglecting the fruits of his previous close observation of nature, the expression of which he always proposed to himself to make a distinguishing quality in his works. He had a profound contempt for all conventional modes in the arts, and was led, even in that early age, by a correct taste, rather than by instruction, to prefer, among the monuments of ancient art, those which were of the age of Phidias, in which the lofty conceptions of the artist are most closely united with truth of expression,—a decision which has since been fully confirmed by the exhibition made to Europe by the British Museum of the first certain monuments of the arts of that era.

‘It may be proper to take here a slight survey of the various circumstances which had promoted the improvement in the arts previously to the arrival of Canova at Rome; for the influence of the genius of one man could not have been wholly adequate to the reconducting of art into its true but forsaken paths, unless the approach to them had been cleared by the sound judgment of some of his predecessors, and without the aid of other favoring circumstances. Indeed the influence of established practice and professional jealousy created no trifling obstacles to the progress

of Canova. These, however, his modest and unassuming conduct aided greatly to remove, while an air of triumph and superiority would, by wounding the feelings of his rivals, have created additional opposition. Already, however, many causes had existed, tending to an improvement in the arts. Among them may be enumerated the encouragement to right studies given by the Marquess Tanucci at Naples, the protection afforded to literature, and the arts at the courts of Charles the Third, Leopold, Benedict the Fourteenth, Pius the Sixth, and by Cardinal Silvio Valenti, the Colbert of the Holy See; by the Albani, the Zelada, and the Borgia; the studies of Mazzochi, Bajardi, Galliani, of the two Venuti, of Maffei, Gesnero, Gori, Passeri, Paoli, and Amaduzzi; the good taste diffused by Cochin, Bellicard, Burlington, Mariette, and Sir William Hamilton; the Herculean discoveries; the travels of St Non, Norden, Pococke, Wheeler, Spon, Revet, and Stuart; the exact admeasurement of ancient architecture by Des Godetz; the masterly works of the Piranesi on the antiquities of Rome; the illustration and rendering public of galleries and museums by means of engravings; the opening of baths; the study of the galleries of the Vatican; the excavation of old edifices; the collection and illustration of old inscriptions by Morcelli, Marini, Zoega, Fea, and Akerblad; the great works of Visconti and Winkelman; the enlightened taste of the Earl of Bristol, and of the Ambassador D' Azara, for these studies; the genius and profound erudition of Hancarville; the valuable collections of Hamilton, Jenkins, and Agincourt; the perfection of the intaglios of Pikler; the fine and bold designs of Flaxman; the attraction given to these studies by the accomplished Algarotti; the triumph over prejudices of the formidable Milizia; the labors of Temanza and Lanzi.—These all supplied immense sources of aid to the young Phidias, and seemed to him to point out that moment as the favorable one for giving a different direction to sculpture from that which was pursued by living masters.

‘It is remarkable, that both sculpture and architecture should at this time owe their revival to the genius of the Venetians; for while Canova was executing his first great works at Rome, Ottone Calderari was reviving the Grecian taste in Vicenza, and Quarenghi, at St Petersburg, was fulfilling, in a masterly style, the magnificent views of that imperial court, by the erection of sumptuous and elegant edifices of every description. It must be allowed, however, that no ordinary degree of genius and courage was required to break loose from the false and vicious rules of art which then prevailed, particularly in sculpture, as not one of his contemporaries had, with all the incitements which have been enumerated, yet advanced a single step in that direction. Indeed the works which Canova first saw at Rome, the productions of

Agostino Penna, Pacili, Bracci, Sibilla, Pacetti, and Angilini are already fallen into total neglect; neither can we discover in them the source of the slightest excitement to the improved style which the Venetian pupil afterwards acquired.

‘The Chevalier Zulian now saw the importance of giving effective assistance to the developing powers of Canova. He therefore placed at his command a fine block of marble, to be devoted to a subject of his own choice, and to show the profit derived from his residence and studies at Rome. This was the first marble sculptured by Canova on those true principles by which he had proposed to himself to be guided in his works; a composition by which a new path was opened to all the productions of the imitative arts. The subject which we chose was Theseus, conqueror of the Minotaur, and the work was conducted throughout in the palace of the Venetian ambassador. It was a highly interesting moment, when his excellent patron produced a cast of the head only of the Theseus to a party of the first artists and critics assembled in his house, without informing them whence it had been obtained. All concurred, however varying in other points, in pronouncing it to be of Grecian workmanship; and many thought they had seen the marble from which it had been taken, not being able, however, to recollect exactly where it was. But when the ambassador conducted them before the original and entire group, their surprise was indeed extreme, and they were forced to exclaim, that by this work art had commenced a new career. On this occasion it may be said, that Theseus was the conqueror, not only of the Minotaur, but of Envy also, forcing from his rival artists the first homage of their admiration of Canova, who at so early an age had raised art to a higher degree of perfection than had been attained by any sculptor since its revival in Italy.’

In this group the Minotaur is represented, according to some of the traditions, with the body of a man and the head of a bull. The contest is already decided, and the lifeless carcass of the fallen monster is carelessly thrown over a rock, which thus furnishes a natural pedestal to the group. The young conqueror is seated on the body, resting his right hand on one of the thighs, and holding in his left the club with which he has achieved his victory. His shoulders are thrown back a little as if he were reposing from a strong effort, while with his head gently inclining forward he fixes a look of proud satisfaction on the face of his antagonist. The subject of this work is very happily chosen. The uncouth form of the monster, while it gives variety to the figures, furnishes a fine foil to the

exquisitely symmetrical shape of the hero. The attitudes of both are perfectly easy, and are also such as to give a unity and pyramidal appearance to the group, which are always pleasing qualities when they naturally result from the subject. The action represented,—a prince, in the flower of youth and beauty, adventuring his life in an almost desperate conflict for the purpose of delivering his country from a savage imposition,—is fitted to awaken emotions which tend to increase the effect of the work. The figure and countenance of Theseus are in the highest style of manly beauty. The features express the stern delight of triumph, mingled with contempt for the brutal enemy. As the situation is substantially the same, so the predominant expression of the features was probably borrowed from that of the Apollo Belvidere, who is supposed to be represented as having just slain the serpent Python with an arrow. The division of the lips, and the disdainful curl of the upper one, are seen alike in both; but the difference in the attitudes removes the appearance of anything like servile imitation in Canova, who has in fact done no more than indicate, by its natural expression, the same sentiment which is shown in the face of the Apollo. The Perseus, one of his later productions, is a direct copy of the celebrated antique statue in question, but is perhaps a less successful exhibition of the talent of the artist than the Theseus. The Countess Albrizzi expresses in strong terms her admiration of the beauty of this statue. ‘Men,’ says she, ‘who behold it, would fain resemble Theseus, while the fairer sex experience all the emotions of Ariadne.’

We have dwelt at some length on this group, because, while it is in itself one of the most finished productions of the chisel of Canova, it is particularly remarkable as the one which opened the series of his mature efforts. It is now, we believe, in possession of Count de Fries, a banker at Vienna, of the house to which our countryman, Mr David Parish, was attached. The talent exhibited in the Theseus gave celebrity at once to the name of Canova, and he was immediately engaged to execute a monument to the memory of Pope Clement the Fourteenth (Ganganelli), in the church of the Holy Apostles at Rome. The complete success with which he acquitted himself of this honorable and arduous commission, is attested, for those who trust more to the judgment of professed connoisseurs than their own, by the following letter, in which the *for-*

midable Milizia,—as he is called in the above extract,—a critic not less distinguished for the uncompromising severity of his judgment, than for the perfection of his taste, expressed his opinion of the monument of Ganganelli soon after its erection in 1787.

‘In the church of the Holy Apostles, near to the Sacristy, and fronting to one of the side aisles, a mausoleum has been erected to the late Pope Ganganelli, by Antonio Canova, a Venetian sculptor. So great is the simplicity of this composition, that it seems all facility, but it is nevertheless full of talent and difficulty. What repose! what elegance! what harmony! Both the sculptural and the architectural parts, in general effect and in detail, are highly classical. Canova may indeed be reckoned among the ancients. I hardly know whether he belongs more to Athens or to Corinth, but of this I feel assured, that if in the best times of Grecian art a subject of this nature had been to be treated, it would have been by such a work as this. During the twenty-six years which I have lived in this city of the world, I have never before seen such universal admiration excited by any work of art as by this. The most intelligent and liberal artists pronounce it to be the nearest approach to the ancients of all the productions of modern sculpture. Even the Jesuits can praise and admire this marble Ganganelli, which certainly may be deemed a miracle of that Pope, who will derive as much glory from this monument as from the suppression of that order. If anything were needed to convince us that this is a perfect work, it would be furnished by the censures of the Michael-Angelists, Berninists, and Borrominists, who point out as defects those parts which are its greatest beauties, charging the drapery, the outlines, and expression, with being Grecian;—“*Dio abbia pietà di loro.*”’

Of the funeral monuments executed by Canova, the most remarkable are the one now mentioned in honor of Pope Ganganelli, that of Pope Clement the Thirteenth (Rezzonico), in the church of St Peter’s at Rome, which was finished in the year 1792, and that of the Archduchess Christina of Austria, which was erected in 1805 by desire of her husband, the Duke of Saxe Teschen, in the church of the Augustine Friars at Vienna. These three compositions are all of the first order of merit, and quite unrivalled by anything of the kind in Europe. The last is generally regarded as the finest of the three, perhaps because the artist has given greater latitude in this than in the others to the tender and amiable feelings that formed the basis of his own moral constitution, and determined

the leading characteristics of his style in sculpture, which are, in general, grace and sweetness rather than power. The description of this monument by the Countess Albrizzi is particularly full and interesting. It will be read, we think, with pleasure, although it loses of course a part of its effect when not accompanied by the engravings.

‘This mausoleum, placed in the church of the Augustines at Vienna, is in memory of Christina of Austria, daughter of Maria Theresa, and wife of Duke Albert of Saxe Teschen. This beautiful and pathetic composition was executed by Canova at the desire of her afflicted husband, whose grief must be soothed and alleviated by the contemplation of the celestial figures which here so finely express the virtues of her whose memory he so fondly cherishes.

‘The monument, the material of which is a greyish marble, presents one side of a pyramid to the spectator, being only slightly raised from the wall against which it rests. It is placed upon an ample base, from which two steps are raised and form the approach to the door of the tomb, over which, on the architrave, the following inscription is engraven; CHRISTINÆ. AUSTRIACÆ. ALBERTI. SAXONIÆ. PRINCIPIS. CONJUGI.

‘There are nine figures employed in this monument, besides the lion and the medallion. They are all of the natural size, and may be divided into four groups. The first, which occupies the middle part, consists of an allegorical figure of Virtue, with two young females bearing torches. Virtue is represented in the form of a young matron of a dignified but afflicted aspect, bearing before her the funeral urn, on which, bending down, she rests her forehead. She is attired in a rich tunic and a mantle, gracefully and appropriately disposed; her hair is unbound and spread in a disorderly manner over her shoulders, and her head is encircled with an olive crown. Ascending the steps, which are spread with a rich carpet, she approaches the door of the tomb. The attendant, who goes before her, has already reached the entrance, where her steps seem for a moment arrested by the awful feelings which the place inspires; but bending forward and lowering her torch to illumine the dark abode, she prepares to enter. The pious attitude of this young female, her loosened tresses falling down in rich curls upon her shoulders, her simple attire and modest step, give to her figure a grace and expression which, unaided by the effect of countenance, I have never seen equalled. The other attendant, who is behind, and is seen in profile, has the same simplicity of dress and character. With downcast eyes and slow and devoted step she follows her celestial conductor. Two wreaths of flowers, joined at the top of the urn, connect

these figures, which, from the depth and harmony of the sentiment that unites them, would separately form a complete and charming composition.

‘They are followed, at a short distance, by the second group, observing in some degree the order of a procession. It consists of a female figure, whom, from the gentleness of her aspect, we recognise to be Beneficence; a blind and aged man whom she is leading; and a young female child. Beneficence is attired with all the simplicity and grace of the Grecian manner. Her hands are sorrowfully crossed before her, and her eyes fixed on the ground with an air of gentleness and affliction. So perfect is the character and expression of this eloquent figure, that she awakens within us all the heightened feelings that the most pathetic poetry could convey. She has ascended the first step, and is followed by the old man, who, leaning on her arm, tries, with the aid of his staff, to raise himself on the step. His appearance bespeaks the feebleness of age and poverty; and his countenance, on which acute sorrow is depicted, is turned towards the tomb, which probably contains his best friend and benefactress. The child, who stands beside him, and is represented with a simplicity conformable to her tender age, is in the humble attitude of prayer. In this group the artist makes a lively allusion to the warmth and readiness of benevolence for which the Princess was so much distinguished. A wreath of flowers, lying on the ground, occupies the short space between the first and second groups; and if our feelings are excited by these deeply impassioned figures, the fine diagonal line in which they cross the steps of the monument is no less pleasing to the eye.

‘Opposite to these figures, on the left, is a magnificent lion, lying crouching on the upper step, who seems the faithful and eternal guardian of the monument. Seated beside him on the steps, is a winged genius, whose form and aspect discover his celestial origin. A mantle, spread beneath him, protects his delicate limbs, while, bending forward and leaning with his right arm and side against the lion, he steadfastly and mournfully looks on the funeral procession. His left hand rests upon the shield of the house of Saxony, of which he is the tutelary genius.

‘The fourth group, which occupies the upper part of the pyramid, is of a more exalted character. The figure of Felicity is there represented, bearing upward the image of the Princess, encircled by the emblem of eternity. The aerial grace and lightness of her motion, her serene and heavenly countenance, her delicate limbs, are all of the most perfect taste and execution. On the other side, a little winged genius flies towards her bearing a branch of palm.

‘Favored by heaven in an illustrious birth and splendid destiny,

this Princess is no less felicitous in possessing such a tomb, where the memory of her virtues, which are symbolized by the most perfect creations of genius, is perpetuated, and which will continue to be an object of interest and admiration so long as virtue and genius shall be regarded on earth.'

We have never had the pleasure of seeing this monument, but the effect of it, even in the imperfect shape of an engraved outline, is very great. In the work before us there are five engravings of it, one representing the entire work, and the others respectively the four groups of figures which are specified in the above description. The fourth group, which is placed near the apex of the pyramid, and is composed of a female figure of Felicity, suspended in the air without any visible support, bearing a medallion with the head of the Archduchess, attended by a little winged genius with a palm-branch, is to us less agreeable than the others, and might, we think, have been omitted without injuring the effect of the monument. It was probably thought necessary to introduce somewhere the face of the Princess. In general the effect of winged human figures, which, if they be well managed, is often agreeable in poetry and even in painting, is positively unpleasant in sculpture. The essential incongruity of the combination is here so apparent, that the imagination cannot lose sight of it; and the main impression suggested is that of a person painfully hovering in the air, without sufficient support and in imminent danger of a fall. A still stronger impression of the same kind is of course produced by the view of a figure suspended in the air, without wings or any visible support whatever. Of the other groups, which are all beautiful in different ways, the central one is perhaps the most attractive. The art with which the sculptor has communicated a mournful expression to the leading figure which is just entering the monument, and of which the back part only is visible, is truly remarkable. The view of these charming groups recalls to mind the exquisite allegorical figures which the delicate genius of Collins has collected round the 'hallowed mould' of the brave who fell in the battle of Fontenoy, the 'gray pilgrim Honor,' 'Spring, with dewy fingers cold,' and the 'weeping hermit Freedom;' and again in the dirge on Colonel Ross;

'The thoughts which musing Pity pays,
And fond Remembrance loves to raise,
Your faithful hours attend;

Still Fancy, to herself unkind,
Awakes to grief the softened mind,
And points the bleeding friend.'

'O'er him, whose doom thy virtues grieve
Ærial forms shall sit at eve,
And bend the pensive head ;
And, fallen to save his injured land,
Imperial Honor's awful hand
Shall point his lonely bed.'

Of the numerous sepulchral monuments of smaller dimensions, and somewhat less celebrity, which Canova executed, that of the poet Alfieri, in the church of *Santa Croce*, or the Holy Cross, at Florence, is the one most worthy of note, as well for the interesting character of the subject, as from the perfection of the work. Canova, like other artists of transcendent genius, was often compelled, probably with some regret, to lavish the treasures of his talent upon noble mediocrity and royal nothingness ; but we may readily conceive, on the other hand, with what inspiration and enthusiasm he must have labored to perpetuate the glory of his illustrious contemporary, who had effected in the poetry of their common country nearly the same revolution which he had himself brought about in the sculpture of modern Europe. Alfieri and Canova were the two great names in art of their day ; and the monument, which thus commemorates them in connexion, will be viewed with the deepest interest, independently of its merit as a work, by all future ages.

'The plan,' says Mad. Albrizzi, 'is lofty and simple, like the spirit of him whom it records. It consists of a simple sarcophagus, the four corners of which are each ornamented with a tragic mask, symbols of the dramatic genius of Alfieri ; and in the centre is sculptured his bust in a medallion, full of life and of that fire which ever glowed in his impetuous breast. On the medallion is inscribed, VICT. ALFIERIUS. AST.

'Standing beside the tomb, and resting upon it her right arm, is a colossal female figure, with a turreted crown. With one hand she holds the border of her mantle to her streaming eyes, while the other falls neglectedly at her side. In her majestic countenance, although clouded with grief, we observe that fine symmetry of features in which beauty consists, and which the rules of art require to be ever preserved. She is attired in a tunic, confined under the breast by a narrow band, over which is a

regal mantle, which, flowing down from her shoulders, forms an ample train, whose large and graceful folds give a wonderful dignity to her person. It is *Italy* weeping over her son, and with such tears as would be grateful even to the lofty spirit of Alfieri himself. On the base of the monument is sculptured a lyre, and underneath it the following inscription,—VICT. ALFIERIO. ASTENSI. ALOYSIA. E. STOLBERGIS. ALBANYÆ. COMITISSA.

‘Among the many noble tombs which adorn this church, that of Alfieri is distinguished by its grandeur, and particularly attracts the attention and admiration of the stranger. It is on this also, that at departing he casts his last glance, as if desirous of treasuring up in his memory so noble an object. May this temple, so sublime a monument of Italian glory, be ever preserved from the sacrilegious hand of violence, and may the ashes of Alfieri here find the repose which his impetuous and inflexible spirit ever disturbed when living.’

The sepulchral monuments executed by Canova would have been sufficient of themselves to have procured him the glory of the restorer of modern sculpture; but with all their merit, they are perhaps not the highest, and certainly not the most pleasing efforts of his genius. The triumph of the plastic art, as of painting, lies in the representation of the human figure; and it is obvious that the artist will have more room and better opportunity for developing his talent for this purpose, in proportion as his attention is less diverted from the main object by accessories of inferior importance. In sepulchral monuments there is generally a large mixture of architectural accessories, which a good deal injure the effect of the sculpture; while in groups, statues, and busts, the human figures, which are the proper objects of attention, are also the only ones. Works of this kind, therefore, are far more favorable for the exhibition of the sculptor’s skill; and of the various classes of subjects to which they may be devoted, those again are the most happy, which afford the greatest latitude for the display of the naked figure. The execution of draperies, though it occasionally affords opportunity for showing a good deal of science, is after all an inferior branch of art. It is often abandoned by the best portrait painters to their pupils; and in statues, the parts that are covered are in reality, as regards effect, almost wholly lost. We find accordingly, that the antique groups and statues, which are the most celebrated, and are in fact considered as indicating the perfection of the art, have little or no drapery; and that of those among them in which draperies are employed,

the naked parts alone attract much attention. As statues and groups afford by far the best field for the exercise of talent, so it is in them that the genius of Canova displayed itself to the greatest advantage and under its peculiar characteristics. The number of his productions of this class is so astonishingly great, that we shall not undertake even to recapitulate, much less to comment upon them; but shall content ourselves with making a few remarks upon three or four of those which exhibit most distinctly the nature and extent of his talent.

One of the very best, and at the same time most decidedly original statues, is the *Penitent Magdalen*. It was executed by Canova in 1796, and intended as a present to his native city; but afterwards passed into the hands of the French, and now forms a part of the collection of Count Sommariva at Paris, where it has a small room entirely to itself, like the *Venus de' Medici* in the gallery of Florence, and the exquisite *Ariadne* of Danneker in that of the banker Bethman at Frankfurt. The *Magdalen* is placed in the centre of this apartment upon a pedestal about three feet high. The figure is of the natural size, and is seated on a rock in the oriental fashion with the feet turned back, and the body resting on them. The arms are extended over the upper part of the thighs, with the palms of the hands upwards and supporting a small cross, upon which the eyes are intensely fixed. The head is bent slightly forward; and the features, which are eminently beautiful, are marked with a strong and deep expression of sorrow. The dishevelled hair falls loosely over the back and shoulders. A slight drapery veils a part of the front of the figure; a cord passes round the waist, while a skull is placed on one side upon the rock. Three engravings are given in the work before us of this fine statue, which we have also had opportunity to examine ourselves. Although the subject is not of that class in which the genius of Canova has been thought to take most delight, the execution of the work is perhaps equal in perfection to that of any of the others; nor is there any appearance in it of the affectation, with which some of them have been at times reproached. The attitude, though rather unusual, at least in our latitudes, is perfectly easy, and the form and features true to the style of beauty which belongs to the character. Settled grief dwells in every line of the countenance, and diffuses itself over every part of the figure, so that we plainly discover the expression of it

even on a side view and when the face is not visible. Nothing indeed can be finer in its way than one of these side views. It presents the flowing outline of a beautiful female form with proportions rather full than slender, but nicely symmetrical. The upturned sole of the delicate foot, the recumbent thigh swelling under the resistance of the legs and feet on which it reposes, the gracefully reclining body, the smooth and gently rounded shoulders, and the finely turned arms and hands, are all finished and disposed with exquisite taste and skill. At the view of so many beauties, voluptuous emotions begin to steal upon the mind ; but the cord that surrounds the waist of the lovely sufferer, the mysterious symbol of torture and penitence that is seen in her hands, the drooping head, the dishevelled hair, the general attitude of utter desolation and abandonment, chasten every idle thought, and inspire, even without the aid of the countenance, the deepest sentiments of melancholy and pity. On a front view, when the form appears to less advantage, the attention is chiefly engaged with the features. These, as we remarked above, are in the finest style of Grecian beauty, but impressed with the stamp of settled grief. No ray of light enlivens the gloom of this beclouded mind. The cross itself, upon which the unhappy victim of passion fixes her gaze, is still a sign of terror rather than of consolation ; and the expression would be that of absolute despair, were there not around the lips a sweetness indicating patient resignation, which holds out a gleam of hope, that her sincere repentance will in time be accepted, and that heavenly grace will descend in whispers of peace to quiet the alarms of her troubled conscience.

In another statue on the same subject, executed for the Earl of Liverpool in the year 1822, the fair penitent is stretched at her length upon a rock, with a cross by her side, in an attitude which recalls to mind that of *Eloisa*, in Pope's *Epistle*,—a poetical *Magdalen*, more touching, perhaps, than any one that painting or sculpture has ever produced.

' See in her cell sad *Eloisa* spread,
Propt on some tomb, a neighbor of the dead.
In each low wind methinks a spirit calls,
And more than echoes talk along the walls.
Here, as I watched the dying lamps around,
From yonder shrine I heard a hollow sound.

"Come, sister ! come," it said, or seemed to say ;
"Thy place is here, sad sister ! come away."

Once like thyself, I trembled, wept, and prayed,
Love's victim then, though now a sainted maid.
But all is calm in this eternal sleep ;
Here grief forgets to groan, and love to weep,
E'en superstition loses every fear ;
For God, not man, absolves our frailties here."

Although the poet in this exquisite Epistle, and the sculptor in the two Magdalens to which we have alluded, have chosen to personify Repentance, under the form of a beautiful female reduced to hopeless misery by the indulgence of licentious passions, there would perhaps be more truth to nature and better means of producing effect, at least in poetry, by assuming for this purpose the internal agony of successful and triumphant guilt. When our deviations from the path of rectitude fail in producing for us the pleasures and advantages we had expected, such is the infirmity of the human heart, that we naturally bewail our ill success rather than our errors. 'He repented of his faults,' says Goethe, in describing the last moments of some wretched vagabond, 'He repented of his faults much, but of his misfortunes much more.'

' Er bereute seine Fehler sehr,
Ja ; und bejammerte sein Unglück noch viel mehr.'

In these cases imagination brings before us the objects which we have failed to attain under new attractions ; and instead of really repenting of our vicious desires, we rather regret that we were not permitted to realize them, and thus to become even more guilty than we have been. The poet, by presenting different trains of thought as passing successively through the mind of his subject, has the means of exhibiting correctly this conflict of opposite and various feelings ; and the truth, energy, and beauty with which it is described, forms in fact the great merit of Pope's *Eloisa*. But the painter and sculptor, who can only represent a single moment of time with its predominant emotion, are compelled to set before us images of Repentance, which, however touching, are to a certain extent untrue to nature. Cromwell in his palace, and not Bonaparte upon his rock, would be the true type of the torments of guilty ambition. When the flush of triumph is over, and experience has proved the nothingness,—considered as elements of happiness in themselves, and independently of the means by which they are acquired and the manner in which they are used,—

of the power, the wealth, the fame, the pleasure, in pursuit of which he has defied the suggestions of his own conscience, and trampled on the happiness of all around him, it is then, and then only, that the slave of Vice looks back with unavailing regret upon the peace of mind which he has lost for ever. It is then that Virtue appears to him in all her natural charms, heightened, if possible, by the coloring of Fancy; and that he begins, like the evil spirit in *Paradise Lost*, to 'pine his loss'; or in the words of the Latin poet, from whom Milton imitated the passage,

'Virtutem videat, intabescatque relictâ.'

This is the moment of real *repentance*, a secret agony that dwells, unperceived by the world, in the inmost recesses of the heart, while perhaps the face is radiant with smiles, and the body robed in purple. The sculptor, whose art dwells only in sensible images, has really no means of delineating these feelings, and must leave it to the poet in his wider range of observation and description to do them justice.

For these reasons the two admirable statues, which we have just been describing, are perhaps, in strict correctness of language, representations of Grief rather than Repentance; but by the aid of accessories, which direct the imagination of the spectator, they produce the effect intended. While they are among the very best, they are also, as we have already remarked, among the most completely original works of Canova, and would suffice of themselves to refute the invidious suggestions sometimes made by his enemies, that he was a mere imitator of the ancients, and entirely destitute of any creative genius of his own. Upon the force of this objection, taken in general, we shall presently have occasion to make a few remarks. Among the other statues of Canova, the *Perseus* and the two *Venuses*, though perhaps not decidedly the first in effect, are particularly remarkable as being direct imitations of the *Apollo Belvidere* and the *Venus de' Medici*. A comparison of these beautiful copies with their still more beautiful models is at once an interesting study, and will afford a convenient occasion for a brief inquiry into the merit of Canova in itself, and as compared with that of the greatest antique sculptors.

The *Perseus* was executed in 1800 for an artist at Milan, but the Pope insisted on retaining it at Rome, and placing it in the Vatican Gallery as a substitute for the *Apollo Belvidere*,

which was then in the Louvre at Paris. The subject is analogous to that of the Apollo, and the general plan of the execution is the same. Perseus is represented in the moment of his victory over the Gorgon Medusa, and holds out at arm's length in his left hand the head which he has just cut off, while his right grasps a dagger. The weight of the figure reposes on the left leg, and the right one is drawn a little upward, and touches the ground only with the toes. The upper part of the body is slightly thrown back, and the face is turned with a look of scornful triumph upon that of the hideous enemy. The attitude and expression are therefore exactly the same with those of the famous original. There is, however, this important difference in the execution of the two statues, that the antique sculptor has given an unnatural roundness and smoothness to the limbs of the Apollo, and has hardly represented the muscles at all, intending, as is commonly supposed, to indicate in this way the supernatural character of his subject. Canova, on the other hand, has brought out fully the entire muscular conformation proper to the age and constitution of his hero. In this particular the modern sculptor has, we think, shown a better judgment than the ancient one. Our idea of divinity is realized and embodied in human forms (as far as it can be so realized and embodied) by representing these forms as they exist at their highest point of perfection, and not by fantastic variations from the truth of nature. A distinct indication of the true shape of the limbs is as necessary to the beauty of a statue, as a correct representation of the features of the face; and a god without muscles must be ranked, as such, with the other imaginary beings that people the heaven of the pagan mythology,—‘Gorgons, and hydras, and chimeras dire.’

Of the two Venuses, one was executed in 1805 for the Grand Duke of Tuscany, but under the express condition that it should not occupy the place of the *Venus de' Medici* in the Florence Gallery; the other is a repetition of the former with some variations, and was executed in 1820 for Mr Thomas Hope. Although the modesty of Canova led him to decline a formal competition with the celebrated antique which has just been mentioned, he has had it in view in both these statues, and in the latter still more directly than in the former. Both are, however, somewhat larger than the model, and depart so much from it in other respects, that they must be regarded as free imitations, or original works on the same subject,

rather than mere copies. In the one first executed, the goddess is just issuing from the bath. She bends the upper part of her body slightly forward, and presses to her breast, with both hands, a cloth with which she is supposed to be drying her person, and which hangs down in loose folds, forming a drapery that nearly covers the front of the statue. She turns her head towards her left shoulder as if listening; and the beautiful countenance, as well as the attitude of the body and disposition of the arms and drapery, exhibits very decidedly the sentiment of alarm, as if she were afraid of being surprised by some unwelcome visitor. The Venus de' Medici has no drapery whatever; and although the attitude and disposition of the arms give to the statue an air of modesty which is one of its principal attractions, yet the countenance indicates complete tranquillity. The sentiment expressed is not the fear of surprise, but rather an instinctive delicacy which shrinks from exposure even in retirement. In the second Venus of Canova the proportions of the figure are rather fuller than in the first, and the disposition of the arms is nearly the same as in the Venus de' Medici. The drapery is considerably reduced, and is secured by the right hand alone, so as to cover only a small part of the front of the figure, while the left arm and hand are drawn up before the breast. The expression of the countenance is that of entire tranquillity. In all these respects the sculptor has shown an evident intention to copy more closely than he did before the celebrated statue, which, as the poet of the Seasons enthusiastically expresses it, 'enchants the world.' The Countess Albrizzi, illustrious herself for beauty as well as wit, and of course a competent judge on the question, enlarges with warmth upon the perfection of both these statues, but declines expressing a preference for either. 'The shape of this Venus,' she observes in reference to the second, 'is more formed than that of the other, and there is more of ease and repose in her posture and features. The minutest difference which so consummate an artist has thought proper to make in two models of female beauty, executed at different periods of his life, is doubtless highly interesting; but I deem it prudent to desist here from a comparison which is dangerous even between mortal beauties, and advise the lover of art to to content himself, as I shall do, with tracing out and admiring the peculiar charms which each of them possesses.' There are two repetitions of the former of these Venuses in its original

shape. The first belongs to the king of Bavaria. The second was executed for Lucien Bonaparte, and is now in possession of the Marquis of Lansdowne.

Any one of these statues, or of the repetitions of them, would confer upon its author the fame of a first-rate sculptor, but when tried by the high standard which is properly applied to the works of Canova, they will not perhaps be considered as among his happiest efforts, and not being such, must of course fall below the famous models which are justly regarded as the masterpieces of the art. There are no circumstances, indeed, under which talent is exhibited with so little advantage as in direct imitations of the finished productions of others. A diligent study of the best models is no doubt an excellent, or rather indispensable means of forming a correct taste ; and to make copies of them is for this purpose a useful exercise. But when it is the object of the artist to display the ripe fruits of his own genius, he should look for models directly and exclusively to nature, and rather avoid than seek such subjects as have already been treated in a masterly way. For in laboring upon them, if he aim at close imitation, the free development of his genius is checked ; and if on the other hand he rather seek to avoid servility, he is apt to run into a false direction for the mere purpose of being original. In either case he loses the direct and unchecked following of nature, which is the only principle of excellence in art. If we compare in detail the Perseus and the Venuses of Canova with their respective models, it is easy to perceive the points in which the latter are inferior. Neither of the Venuses, however exquisitely beautiful they both may be, is equally perfect in shape or features with the Medici ; and the tranquil modesty of the latter is a far more pleasing expression than the startled timidity of the others. The second Venus has nearly the expression of the antique ; but here again the fuller proportions are an unfortunate variation, because they contrast with the extreme and, as it were, ethereal delicacy which seems to be the leading characteristic of the subject. The Perseus, which we think sustains this dangerous comparison better than the Venuses, wants perhaps the exact truth to nature in the attitude and disposition of the limbs, which distinguishes the Apollo Belvidere, and brings out so happily the character of intellectual and moral sublimity, which the artist intended to impart to his work. The attitude of the Perseus has been said by some to

be impossible ; and if we grant that this statement of the objection is a strong exaggeration, it must yet perhaps be admitted that the figure has not the complete freedom which the expression of nobleness and superiority so peculiarly requires. We may conclude, on the whole, that notwithstanding the extraordinary merit of these imitations by Canova, the two antique models retain the preëminence which they have always been allowed to possess over all the other efforts of the art. There is something indeed in the nature of these subjects, combined with the perfection of the execution, which renders it nearly impossible that they can ever be surpassed or even equalled. The manly and the female form, each in its perfect state, and inspired by the moral expression that properly belongs to it, are the natural types of sublimity and beauty. When, therefore, the two have been represented with their respective attributes of imposing dignity and modest grace, in a style of execution which seems to realize our idea of perfection, it is evident that the capacity of the art for producing effect is exhausted. The best subjects have been treated in the best manner ; and nothing remains for succeeding artists, but to repeat them under all the disadvantages attending imitation, or to do the best they can with inferior subjects, which, however well treated, must necessarily produce inferior effects. A somewhat similar result takes place in the other departments of art after they have been carried, in point of execution, to a high degree of perfection ; but it is more remarkable in sculpture than in the rest, because there is no other in which any one or more particular subjects are so distinctly marked out by nature as the best. For these reasons the Apollo Belvidere and the Venus de' Medici will probably be regarded for ever as the *ne plus ultra* of statuary, the 'matchless boast' of the age, the country, and the unknown artists that produced them. We may imagine, though with difficulty, other groups of equal or even superior merit to the Laocoon ; because in the infinite variety of actions and passions that lie within the compass of possibility, and of the figures which they respectively bring together, there is no one combination that naturally strikes the mind as positively superior to all others. But for single statues which produce the two great effects of the art, sublimity and beauty, in their simplest, and of course purest and most perfect forms, two subjects, corresponding respectively with these two effects, are distinctly indicated

by nature as the best ; and the boldest imagination is wholly incapable of going beyond them.

But while we think that Canova, in his attempt to copy these miracles of art has fallen below his inimitable originals, we are not prepared to admit that his genius was inferior to that of the sculptors who produced them. We conceive, on the contrary, that he carried the art to as high a pitch of perfection as it ever has been or ever can be brought to. We must estimate the extent of his talent, not by comparing his imitations with their models, but by comparing his best original works with those of other sculptors. Nor is it of course necessary, in order to vindicate his claim to an equality with the Grecian artists, that he alone should have produced a collection of masterpieces equal in number to the vast multitude of recovered antique works that fill the galleries of Europe. A single production of first-rate merit insures its author the glory of a first-rate artist, which is, however, doubtless more cheerfully and generally accorded when his genius is prolific as well as powerful. Such was the character of that of Canova. His works, in almost all the departments of sculpture, are exceedingly numerous ; and the best of them stand, in our opinion, on a line of equality with the finest remains of antiquity. The *Theseus*, the *Penitent Magdalen*, the *Hebe*, and twenty others that might be cited, are in no way inferior to the *Fighting* and *Dying Gladiators*, the *Listening Slave*, the *Antinous*, and the numerous other antiques that belong, by general acknowledgment, to the first class. If none of them equal the *Apollo* and *Venus*, it is, as we have remarked above, because the latter are placed by the nature of their subjects beyond the possibility of rivalry. The Greeks are entitled, no doubt, to the peculiar honor of having first carried the art to perfection ; but this was effected by a gradual process, and the glory of doing it belongs to the artists as a body, or rather to the ever memorable nation which produced them, and appertains in a very limited extent to any individual. It is indeed a most extraordinary thing, that among the vast variety of communities, under so many different conditions of society, which cover the face of the globe, one only should have discovered and applied to practice the true principles of taste in the arts. And yet, strange as it is, it is nevertheless certain, that in Greece only,—a little cluster of communities, hardly more populous at the time of their highest prosperity than the New England states are now, and oc-

cupping a territory not more highly favored, as respects geographical extent and character, than ours,—in Greece only, we say, and in those countries of modern times which have been inspired by her example, do we find any approach to perfection, or any appearance of correct taste in the arts, although they have all been attempted by almost all other nations, and by many far superior to Greece in the principal circumstances which would seem likely to facilitate success, such as wealth, population, and especially stability of political institutions. To what particular causes the Greeks owed this remarkable peculiarity in their national character, whether to some natural advantages of climate (in which they yet seem to have possessed no decided preëminence), or, as is more probable, to their popular forms of government, which brought into action the sincere and unsophisticated opinions and feelings of the body of the community as the test of excellence of every description, is a question that we need not and cannot here discuss. The fact, however, is undoubted. The honor of it, as we remarked above, belongs in the main to the Greeks as a nation, and not to particular individuals, although we may justly allow a very singular degree of merit to those artists who, in each department, give as it were the finishing stroke to the work, however nearly it may have been brought to perfection by their immediate predecessors. The Ægina marbles, for example, now preserved in the museum of the king of Bavaria, are a single step only behind those of Athens. They exhibit the true principles of taste, and want nothing but the perfect freedom and grace in the application of those principles, which belong to the later school of Phidias. Yet the final effort by which this celebrated sculptor brought the art to perfection, though not perhaps more difficult than some of those by which it had been advanced to the state he found it in, has consecrated his name to perpetual remembrance, while those of all his predecessors are lost. To a glory like this, Canova can of course have no pretension. His genius, like that of all modern sculptors, like those of the artists of the period to which belong nearly all the antique works that have come down to us, like those of the authors of the *Apollo Belvidere* and the *Venus de' Medici* was inspired by the contemplation of the masterpieces of a former age. Next, however, in order to the merit of original invention, is that of reviving the true principles of an art or science after they have long been lost ; and this,

we think, Canova has a right to claim. He must be looked upon as the real restorer of sculpture in modern times. Michael Angelo is doubtless an illustrious name ; but in all the arts which he exercised, though his genius was bold, creative, and imposing, his taste was imperfect ; and he exhibits the extravagance which is one of the symptoms of a still progressive and immature style. In painting he was excelled, in his own time, by Rafael ; and after the lapse of nearly three centuries, Canova has finally raised the sister art, from the point where Michael Angelo left it, to the antique standard of perfection, and has thus proved himself the Rafael of sculpture, and the Phidias of modern days. If the name of Phidias be justly regarded, and must always remain, the first and greatest in sculpture, that of Canova will rank for ever as the second, at least until the art shall again be lost, and some other happy genius, whose merit would of course be the same with his, shall again restore it to all its present lustre. In building, the taste of Michael Angelo, though not less objectionable than in painting and sculpture, has not yet been much improved upon by his successors. The architectural Phidias of modern days is yet to come ; and the probable place of his appearance, if we may venture to say it, without awakening the jealousy of rival nations, seems to be indicated with sufficient exactness by the granite quarries and popular institutions of our western continent.

Such by the general acknowledgment of the age is the merit of Canova, and his rank when compared with other sculptors of ancient and modern times. But although the European public has been nearly unanimous in according to his works the tribute of enthusiastic approbation, he has yet found detractors even on the Continent ; and some of the leading British journalists, though evidently in a great measure uninformed respecting his productions and character, have exhibited, as we remarked above, their usual national partiality by attempting to depress his reputation below that of one of their own countrymen. This is the more remarkable, because the real judges of the art in England have given the strongest evidence of the value they set upon his works, in the eagerness they have shown to possess them. Some of the finest of them have been executed for or purchased by the principal personages in Great Britain, such as the Dukes of Wellington, Bedford, and Devonshire, Lord Liverpool, the Marquis of Lands-

downe, Mr Hope, Lord Brownlow, and the King himself. It has, however, been objected to this great artist, that he has employed his genius too much upon subjects taken from the Greek mythology. The proper business of the artist, it is said, is to imitate nature as he sees it around him. If he go back for subjects to Grecian history and fable, he will probably give us nothing more than repetitions of the works of the Grecian sculptors, since the direct study of nature is the only path to originality in art. It is farther objected that in some of his statues there is an air of affectation, and a profusion of unmeaning accessories in the way of ornament, which make them look like groups of opera dancers, rather than images taken from real life.

The first of these objections, which is stated in detail, and with an air of much triumph, in the London Quarterly Review, seems to be founded in the mere spirit of wanton hypercriticism, which does not even take the pains to be consistent and plausible in error. It is admitted by all, that direct imitation of particular forms, that is, the taking of portraits, whether in painting or sculpture, is an inferior branch of art. But in treating historical subjects, the great merit of an artist does not lie in preserving with strict fidelity the figure and costume of his characters, but in powerful delineations of the passions belonging to the situation in which they are placed. In order to do this with success, he must study nature in the depths of his own mind and in the varying action of the world around him; but in displaying the results of this study, it is wholly unimportant whether he lay his scene in his own time, or in any former one, or in the fabulous epochs and regions of mythology. Shakespeare drew his materials for the character of Macbeth from his observations on the workings of ambition in himself and his contemporaries; but the image is not the less true and striking, because the character is dressed in a Scotch bonnet and plaid instead of the British costume of the age of Elizabeth. When a sculptor has produced a perfect image of the airy form, elastic step, and thoughtless gayety that belong to the spring of life, of what consequence is it whether he call his work *Youth* or *Hebe*, that is, whether he give it its proper name in Greek or in English? The Adam and Eve of Milton's *Paradise Lost* represent precisely the same subjects with the Apollo Belvidere and the Venus de' Medici, and with equal success according to the different capacities of the arts of

poetry and sculpture ; but is the effect, in either case, less striking because the nature so admirably delineated is not baptized with a modern European name ? Would the ' fair large front and eye sublime ' of Adam appear to greater advantage if his body were habited in a coat, waistcoat, and breeches ? Are the hyacinthine locks that

' Round from his parted forelock manly hung
Clustering, but not beneath his shoulders broad,'

less graceful than the flowing wig of the age of Louis the Fourteenth, or the convenient crop of the present ? Every impartial reader will reply without hesitation in the negative. But while it is thus a matter of indifference where the artist lays the scene of his work, provided it be true to nature, there may be, on the other hand, particular classes of subjects which, for accidental reasons, are particularly favorable to the exercise of each of the arts. And without going into general considerations, which would carry us too far, we may remark, that sculpture delights especially in such subjects as allow the representation of flowing draperies and of the naked human figure. Draperies of all kinds occasion, as we have already suggested, an expense of labor for a comparatively trifling effect ; and the stiff costumes of the modern world, however well they may be managed in painting (and even there they are in general sufficiently ungraceful), are intolerable in marble. The historical and mythological personages of antiquity are therefore really superior to all other subjects for the purposes of sculpture ; not because there is a magic virtue in the name of Greece or of antiquity, but for the simple reason, that a swanlike neck and a finely turned arm are more agreeable objects to contemplate than a starched ruff and a sleeve *à la gigot*. In frequently working upon this class of subjects, Canova has, therefore, exhibited good sense and a correct understanding of the means of producing effect ; while the perfection with which he has treated various other subjects of a different kind, demonstrates that he is in no way indebted for success to a servile imitation of the antique.

The other objection, that in some of his works there is a childish expression and a profusion of useless accessories, has perhaps some slight foundation in truth, but does not affect his general reputation, because it applies only to a few hasty efforts of little or no consequence. In stating that the groups of Canova appear like opera dancers rather than images of real life,

the critic had probably in view two or three models for works in relievo, particularly those of *Venus dancing with the Graces*, and of *Helen carried off by Theseus*. In these productions certain garlands, similar to those which are often employed in the ballets of the French opera, are in fact introduced, and probably furnished the hint for this flattering and candid criticism. But without inquiring here, whether a garland of flowers, one of the most beautiful and poetical objects in nature, be or be not absolutely inadmissible in sculpture because it is occasionally used at the opera, we may add, that the aforesaid models were so little valued by Canova, that he did not even execute them in marble. They have been preserved in the collections of engravings by the effect of that religious reverence that attaches importance to every trifle connected with the objects of its just veneration. Among the finished works of Canova, whether of greater or less importance, only one, namely, the Group of the Graces, exhibits this obnoxious feature ; but without disparagement to the better judgment of others, we must confess, that the garlands, with which these beautiful forms are entwined, appear to us to have been the happiest accessories which the sculptor could have employed to sustain his three figures, and at the same time leave them, as the subject required, almost wholly without drapery. Mad. Albrizzi, who criticizes under the influence of a different, but much more correct feeling, than the London Reviewers, calls it a 'happy thought to sustain the figures of the Graces with flowers.' This charming work was executed by Canova for the Emprèss Josephine. It bears the same relation to the antique group on the same subject, which the Perseus and Venuses bear to the Apollo Belvidere and Venus de' Medici ; and like them it falls, we think, rather short of the model. The symmetry and finish of the figure are perhaps equally perfect, but the attitudes and expression are somewhat less fortunate. Instead of the easy position, and open, tranquil countenances of the antique group, we have in that of Canova an artificial twining of the arms, and an almost childish sweetness, bordering too nearly upon unpleasant insipidity, in the faces. The antique artist had chosen the correct posture and expression, the same which Canova would probably have employed, had he wrought with entire independence. But the latter having been requested to execute a work upon the same subject with the ancient *chef-d'œuvre*, and being willing to avoid the appear-

ance of servile imitation, adopted variations in the mode of treating it, which were necessarily alterations for the worse. This group is the only one of the numerous productions of Canova, in which we have noticed any appearance of the affected sweetness of countenance, which has been represented by unfriendly critics as one of the faults in his general manner. Although, as we have already shown in detail, he has often treated the stronger passions with much success, Grace and Tenderness, as they corresponded with the prominent features in his own moral character, breathe of course through the marble upon which he had impressed it. But the expression of these amiable qualities is always governed by a perfect taste, and never deviates into affectation, at least in no other instance than that which we have now remarked. We may add here, that while Canova has, in all his statues, employed as little drapery as possible, and although his style be soft and graceful, in some cases almost to voluptuousness, he has never overstepped the limits prescribed by the strictest delicacy, but on the contrary has sedulously studied, more than almost any other sculptor, all the reserve which real modesty requires. So remarkable is this peculiarity in his manner, that even female critics of the purest taste have reprehended him for excessive fastidiousness. 'A light drapery,' says the Countess Albrizzi in her remarks on the *Psyche*, 'a light drapery of brilliant whiteness and of the finest texture, which forms an admirable contrast with the almost natural tints of the flesh, and does honor even to the chisel of Canova, is folded with graceful simplicity around her. But why, O Psyche! conceal beneath that envious vest thy lovely limbs, when, veiled only in thy ingenuousness and artless innocence, the thoughts of those who fix their admiring eyes upon thee become pure and guiltless as thyself?'

It would be impossible for us, within the limits to which we are obliged to confine ourselves, to comment upon all even of the remarkable productions of this prolific genius. Having noticed, in some detail, two or three of the principal sepulchral monuments and single statues, we shall mention somewhat more concisely a few of the groups, busts, and portraits.

Of the groups, the finest are that of the *Three Graces*, to which we have just alluded, the two on the subject of *Cupid and Psyche*, the *Venus and Adonis*, and the *Mars and Venus*. The two last are in our opinion the most perfect of the whole.

The subject of them is substantially the same under different names, and is obviously the best that can be chosen for a group of two figures, manly strength and dignity brought into contrast with female softness, grace, and beauty. It is not treated in any of the antique groups that have been preserved, so that Canova has, in this instance, exercised his talent with perfect freedom; and his complete success proves, that when he has wrought upon the same subjects with the ancients, he has been, as might have been expected, embarrassed rather than assisted by his models. In bringing together in a group the natural types of sublimity and beauty, it is impossible that either effect can be produced in its highest degree, because the sentiment that unites the two figures softens in part the peculiar attributes of both. A group of this kind would therefore never present a combination of two forms as perfect as those of the Apollo Belvidere and the Venus de' Medici. The 'settled majesty of proud disdain' naturally melts into a milder expression in the neighborhood of beauty; whose ideal image must be supposed in turn, like the maid of France, in Milman's poem, to gaze upon the noble form of the 'heavenly archer' with 'more than reverence.' But though something be lost in the perfection of both figures by bringing them together, there is a new source of pleasure in the contrast of their respective beauties. Canova has, we think, done full justice to this subject, especially in the Venus and Adonis, and given it all the effect which it could possibly be made to produce. Adonis stands erect, with a hunting spear in his right hand, as if preparing for the chase. His left arm encircles the waist of the goddess, who stands at his side, with one hand resting on his left shoulder, and the other gently touching his cheek with the ends of the fingers. Her countenance expresses tenderness mingled with regret, while the young sportsman is all unconcern and indifference. His companions expect him, and his thoughts are already far away upon the distant mountain-tops and in the sylvan haunts of the savage boar. It is evidently to no purpose, that Venus is using every effort to detain him. At the view of this somewhat disparaging representation of the power of beauty, our fair critic relaxes a little from her habitual tone of unmingled panegyric, and gently reprehends the sculptor, in the name of the sex, for his want of gallantry. 'This delightful group,' says she, 'must command the admiration of every one, but will be least pleas-

ing to our sex, who cannot endure, even in marble, that the sentiment which they inspire should be weaker than that which they themselves experience. If this subject had been treated by a female artist, undoubtedly Adonis would have been the suppliant. It is generally felt, that the figure of Venus, notwithstanding the seducing softness of her limbs, and the loveliness of the features, heightened as it is by the expression of gentleness and affection, is not so strikingly beautiful as that of her lover. Is this because she is in the attitude of solicitation? Gentle dames! what a lesson is this for us, and what can we expect when it is necessary to sue, if Venus herself in so doing loses her attraction.'

This group was executed in 1795 for an Italian nobleman, and is now the property of Mr Favre of Geneva. The *Mars and Venus* was executed in 1816, for the king of Great Britain. The two on the subject of Cupid and Psyche belonged to the ex-king of Naples, Murat, and were both at one time placed in the royal palace of Compiègne near Paris. One of them is now in possession of the emperor of Russia. They are both charming compositions, but inferior, we think, to the antique group. We have not room, however, to comment upon them in detail. Among the busts on ideal subjects may be mentioned those of the *Laura* of Petrarch and the *Beatrice* of Dante; with that of *Helen*, which was presented by Canova to his fair commentator, as a token of his satisfaction with her descriptions of his works, the first editions of which were published during the sculptor's life. In the subsequent ones, she expresses in turn her gratitude for the present. 'That enchanting Helen was to Paris the precious token of the gratitude of Venus, and now her image presents itself to my eyes endeared by the same noble sentiment. But this highly valued gift serves only to manifest the friendship and generous feelings of Canova towards me; for as to these imperfect descriptions of the delightful productions of his chisel, his indulgence alone in respect to them has made me proud and grateful.'

The chisel of Canova was comparatively seldom exercised in portraits (if this term may be used in reference to statuary), but of the few which he executed, two are particularly remarkable from the extraordinary interest of the subjects. We allude to those of *Napoleon* and *Washington*. The former is of a size larger than nature, and was executed in 1803 for

Napoleon himself. There is also a bronze cast of the model in the palace of the arts at Milan. The *Washington*, as our readers are aware, was executed for the state of North Carolina, and was sent home, we believe, in the year 1821. The *Napoleon* is entirely without drapery, excepting a loose military cloak which hangs from the left arm, without covering any part of the figure. The *Washington* is clothed in the habit of an ancient Roman warrior. In both cases, Canova has, we think, exhibited a less correct judgment in regard to costume, than we should naturally have expected from his consummate taste. However superior naked figures and flowing draperies may be, for the purposes of art, to the formal and fantastic dresses of the modern world, we hold it to be quite clear, that portraits, whether in painting or sculpture, must be clothed in the costume which the persons represented habitually wore. The object here is not to produce the highest possible effect, but the highest effect consistent with the imitation of a given model. For this reason the taking of portraits is doubtless an inferior branch of art; but it has, nevertheless, its own rules that cannot be violated without sacrificing the value of the work, which, in that case, may be a fine statue or painting, but will not be a fine portrait, and, having been intended for a portrait, will probably, after all, not be an ideal work of the first order. In the statue of Napoleon we hardly recognise, even after we know it to have been intended for him, the well known form and features, and are disappointed, instead of being gratified, by the ideal perfection of the figure. The nearest possible approach to the person of Bonaparte, as it was at the period of his first campaign in Italy, with a modern military costume, would have produced, as a portrait, an infinitely greater effect. Napoleon himself does not seem to have been satisfied with the work, which, though placed in the gallery of the Louvre, was concealed from public view by a curtain. The *Biography of Living Characters* affirms with a ludicrous excess of political party feeling (in a passage quoted in our former article on this subject), that the statue exhibited at once so perfect a resemblance to the model, and so ignoble a form and countenance, that the emperor was ashamed to have it seen. Every spectator, not absolutely blinded by prejudice, sees at a single glance, that it is a grand heroic figure infinitely nobler than that of the subject, but of little or no value as a portrait, precisely from the want of re-

semblance. After the abdication of Napoleon, it was presented by the allies to the Duke of Wellington, and now remains in his possession, a most appropriate and splendid trophy of his victory over the before unconquered original. The costume of the Washington is less injudicious than the *no-costume* of the Napoleon, but is not, in our opinion, conceived on correct principles of taste. The sitting attitude, employed by Canova, is also less advantageous than the upright one would have been. It is only in fact in a standing position, that the human figure displays its full natural dignity ;

‘Os homini sublime dedit cœlumque tueri
Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.’

Now as dignity, moral and physical, was the peculiar characteristic of Washington, the attitude best fitted to express this quality seemed to be almost commanded by the subject. We were therefore a good deal surprised to find, upon conversing with Chantrey on the plan of his statue on the same subject, before he had begun the model, that he was wavering between a standing and sitting position ; and we have seen with much satisfaction, that he finally decided in favor of the former. In this particular and in that of the costume, his work is a happier one than that of his illustrious Italian contemporary ; and as his talent in this branch of the art is probably equal, the citizens of Boston may boast of possessing a decidedly finer statue of Washington, than that of Canova, though by a generally inferior sculptor.

Our limits will not permit us to enlarge any farther upon the particular merits of the different works of Canova, which amount in number to several hundreds, or even to specify their subjects. Our object has been to indicate the general character of his style of sculpture, and to illustrate our views respecting it by observations on a few of his productions. Nor have we room to dwell at length upon the events of his life,—his embassy to Paris in 1814, for the purpose of reclaiming the works of art which had been carried away from Italy by the French, or the numerous titles, crosses, and pensions, that were conferred upon him by the admiration and gratitude of the various sovereigns of Europe. ‘No artist,’ says his biographer, ‘was ever more exposed to the intoxicating effects of honors and distinctions, exceeding perhaps any instance of the kind in the history of the arts. But although decorated with the equestrian orders of many great sovereigns, decreed noble

in several states, dignified by titles, enriched by pensions, honored by important charges and functions, received with distinction at all courts, desired in all societies, and associated with all the principal academies of Europe, he still preserved the simplicity and modesty of his character. His disposition was naturally highly benevolent, and all his pensions and gains were devoted to useful and charitable purposes, so that some interference was often required to prevent him from embarrassing his circumstances by a too active generosity.' Various instances of his munificence are related in detail by his biographer, which we have not space to copy. He appears in fact to have been the chief patron of the arts and of those who cultivated them at Rome. Rome herself, during the gloomy period when she was deprived of the presence of her sovereign, and incorporated with the French empire, is said to have found her principal economized resources in the presence of this illustrious and indefatigable artist. What a fall was there, when the Eternal City, the Empress of the world, was brought so low that she could draw consolation and relief from the chisel of a single sculptor ! What a contrast too, between these active and amiable private virtues, and the wild extravagance, the gross sensuality, the revolting eccentricities, which so often obscure the light of transcendent genius ! What would not have been the happiness and glory of Lord Byron, for example, could he have combined with his powerful and brilliant poetical talent such a moral character as that of Canova ! The contemplation of such a union of various excellences reconciles us with humanity ; while the extraordinary success and popularity which formed, in this instance, the reward of real merit, consoles us in part for the frequent temporary ascendancy of error, violence, and vice.

It only remains to notice, very briefly, the last moments of this interesting and well filled life. Canova had early impaired his health by intense application, before his reputation and success procured him the means of employing assistants in executing the less important parts of his works. When engaged upon the monument of Pope Rezzonico, he was obliged to make constant use for a long time of a machine which required a pressure on the breast, and thus occasioned a disorganization in that part, which injured his health through life, and was probably the cause of the schirrous affection of the stomach, which finally proved mortal. A careful, regular, and simple

mode of living prevented, however, any immediate ill effects, and his labors were seldom interrupted by illness until just before his death. The great vital organ which was diseased finally ceased to perform its functions; and the illustrious artist resigned himself to undergo the common lot of humanity with a calmness and serenity corresponding with the beauty and purity of his life. When his brother, who was his constant domestic companion, brought him some of the last soothing remedies, ' 'T is good,' said he, 'very good, but 't is all to no purpose,'—*Buono, buonissimo, ma è inutile.* 'And yet,' continued the kind-hearted sculptor, 'let me taste it, that I may stay with you a little longer.' The last words which he uttered, and which he repeated at several different times, were *Anima bella e pura*, 'pure and gentle spirit,' a reminiscence, perhaps, of the well known address of the dying man to his soul by the Emperor Adrian, which is imitated in the *Dying Christian* of Pope. *Animula, vagula, blandula!* As the stern soul of Napoleon appeared in the midst of its mortal agony to be directing the storm of battle at the head of his army,—*tête armée* being the last words he pronounced,—so this milder, though not less lofty spirit, while hovering on the confines of eternity, was still engaged in the sweet and soothing contemplations in which it habitually delighted. We have already mentioned the period of his death at the commencement of this article. The funeral honors which were rendered to his memory in his native city and throughout all Italy, clearly indicated the public estimation of his works and genius.

'The loss of Canova occasioned the deepest affliction throughout the city of Venice, the power which regulates human destinies having conducted him to the tomb in that country where he had first drawn breath. The patriarch himself would perform the funeral rites; and the academic body, who were desirous of supporting his bier, conducted the coffin of their revered brother and master to the church, and thence to the hall of the academy, followed by so numerous a train, that that vast apartment was insufficient to contain them. The walls of the hall were hung with engraved copies of the works of Canova, so numerous that they appeared the labors of a whole race of artists, rather than of a single mind and hand. The president of the academy, an affectionate friend of the deceased,' (Count Cicognara himself,) 'delivered the oration, exciting in the minds of the assembly the same deep emotions by which he was himself affected. The only torch, which burnt beside the bier, stood on that ancient bronze which

had, for so many centuries, been used to receive the votes of the patricians in the hall of the great council, and was deemed a suitable candelabrum for the last offices paid to the latter glories of the Venetian state.

‘Immediately after the ceremony, the body was removed to Possagno, where an honorable tomb will be raised to his memory in the new church now nearly completed. The funeral rites were performed on the twenty-fifth of October, and a discourse delivered by a distinguished prelate to so large a concourse of the inhabitants of that district, that it was found necessary to address them under the open sky. Throughout Italy the deepest affliction prevailed on this event. Rome, who lost by his death the restorer of her modern greatness, decreed to him the honor of a statue, proclaimed him perpetual president of her chief academy, and ordered for him a funeral in the church of the Holy Apostles, of such magnificence that all the tributary arts were occupied for many months in the preparation of it. The Pope contributed largely to the expense; and the whole of the magistracy, together with the representatives of the first powers in Europe, showed their respect for it by their presence. Likewise Florence, Trevigi, Udine, and Lodi, gave each her public demonstrations of grief on this occasion; but none with more zealous promptitude than the Venetian artists, the kind friends and fellow academicians of Canova. Immediately on his death, they voted to his memory the grandest and most distinguished monument that could be devised. Not to limit the honor of this design to Venice alone, or even to Italy, the subscription was thrown open to all Europe, to whom his fame might be deemed to belong; whereupon the powers then assembled at Verona, following the example of our august emperor, severally evinced their desire of promoting this object by munificent donations; as the more distant sovereigns also did on the announcement of the project. So rapid and considerable was the subscription, that long before the ensuing spring they were in condition to begin the work.

‘A monument to the memory of Titian had been designed by Canova in the year 1792, which it was intended to raise in the church De’ Frari in Venice; but the design, which was to have been effected by subscription, failed by the death of Chevalier Zulian, its chief promoter, in 1795. The model being thus left on hand, without any prospect of its being carried into execution, Canova adopted the same idea for the monument of the Archduchess Christina, reducing however the dimensions, and with considerable alterations in the groups. The opportunity of restoring to its original state and colossal proportions, this beautiful composition, far more suitable to a consummate artist than a piouss princess, and perhaps even better adapted to a sculptor than to

a painter ; the absence of all rivalry in the adoption of the design of him whom all considered as a master ; and the means it afforded of employing at the same time the numerous sculptors who were anxious to pay homage to the memory of Canova, all concurred to justify the choice of this model, formed by the hand of Canova himself.'

During the last years of his life, Canova was much occupied with a plan for the erection of a church in his own native village of Possagno. This project grew out of another which he had conceived upon the return of the Pope to Rome from his exile in France. Though totally free from affectation and fanaticism, Canova was deeply and sincerely religious, a quality which seems indeed to be almost implied in the strong sensibility to the beauty and sublimity of nature that constitutes the principle of genius. The extraordinary character of the political revolutions of 1814, considered particularly in their influence on the interests of the church, produced so powerful an impression on his mind, that he was desirous of commemorating them by a work of his own art. He accordingly prepared a model of a statue of *Religion*, personified under the form of a colossal female figure, of the height of thirty palms, which he intended to execute at his own expense, and erect in some one of the principal churches at Rome.

'By the completion of this design,' says the biographer, 'the present age would have possessed a wonder of art and sublimity to which it has never yet seen anything equal, emanating too solely and spontaneously from the mind of the artist, wholly unstigated and unaided by extraneous means. All Europe looked forward to see it adding to the glory of the Vatican, or adorning the magnificent expanse of the Pantheon. Already the model was completed, the marble disposed, and the chisel of the sculptor suspended until the signal of authority should be given by pointing out a place for its reception. It will be for history to explain the causes of the frustration of this devout and magnanimous design ; and perhaps it may be found needful to draw a veil over the motives to which it may be traced. Posterity will with difficulty believe, that no place could be found at Rome for the reception of the sacred image of Religion. It is however certain, that the model remained for many years the object of public admiration, a masterly engraving being made from it with the following inscription, *Pro felici reditu Pii VII. Pontificis maximi Religionis formam sua impensa in marmore exculpendam Antonius Canova libens fecit et dedicavit* ; and that finally it was

worked in marble, a little above the natural size, by order of Lord Brownlow. The emblem of Catholicism was thus rejected from the Tiber, and found refuge on the banks of the Thames.

‘This extraordinary circumstance did not, however, depress the mind of Canova, who, actuated by the deepest religious feelings, had already formed the design of consecrating his fortune and the last efforts of his genius to the commemoration of a period in which the inscrutable decrees of Providence had been so remarkably displayed. That the statue which he had projected for this pious purpose might not be profaned by any less sacred use, he resolved on raising a temple for its reception in his native village, to be enriched with the productions of his chisel; by which means also he would open a perpetual source of prosperity for Possagno, in the concourse of workmen, the visits of strangers, and the expenditure of his entire fortune. The first stone of this sumptuous edifice was accordingly laid in July, 1819, amidst an immense concourse of people, with all the solemnities of religion, and the deep emotions of the assembly. But the artist had not foreseen, that this design would require an infinitely greater expenditure than that of the colossal statue; to supply which it became necessary for him to renew his labors, and to undertake fresh commissions. Accordingly he set about new statues, groups, and monuments, working incessantly, and with all the ardor of his youthful application; his mind always intent on the great object of his pious wishes. It is not improbable, that this greatly increased exertion, and the mental excitation consequent on it, tended to accelerate the termination of his existence.’

The church, as we learn from one of the preceding extracts, is now nearly completed, and will doubtless be finished by the piety of the friends and patrons of the great sculptor and his art; but what hand is competent to take the place of his in executing the statue which was to have been its principal ornament? It is singular indeed that objections should have been made to the erection of such a monument at Rome. We have no further information whatever respecting their nature, than is given in the above extracts. The model, of which there is an engraving in the work before us, is certainly conceived in the highest style of sublimity; and if executed with the usual felicity of the artist, and on the grand scale which he had intended, would have been perhaps the noblest effort of his chisel and of modern sculpture.
